

Cedar Street Bridge
Spanning the Kinnickinnic River, on Cedar Street
River Falls
Pierce County
Wisconsin

HAER No. WI-52

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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Location: Spanning the Kinnickinnic River, on Cedar Street
River Falls, Pierce County, Wisconsin

UTM: 15.4967500.529880
Quad: River Falls, Wisconsin

Date of Construction: 1908

Builder: Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company

Present Owner: City of River Falls

Present Use: Vehicular and pedestrian bridge

Significance: The Cedar Street Bridge is one of two steel arch
bridges remaining in the State of Wisconsin. The
Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company, that built
the bridge, was a regionally significant company.

Historian: Lola Bennett
Wisconsin Historic Bridges Recording Project
Summer 1987

HISTORY

Originally known as Kinnickinnic, River Falls prospered as a milling community in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its location, at the junction of two powerful spring-fed rivers, was ideal for both saw mills and flour mills. By 1880, the village boasted of five flour mills.¹

The river, however, was not always friendly to the village. River Falls experienced a tremendous flash flood in 1894. The Kinnickinnic River washed away buildings, dams and bridges, including a span on Cedar Street. The damage amounted to more than \$40,000.²

A map from 1895 shows a bridge crossing the river at Cedar Street, so it is likely that the bridge was rebuilt fairly soon after the flood.³ By 1908, however, the town had decided to construct a new bridge in that location. They contracted with the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company.

MINNEAPOLIS STEEL AND MACHINERY COMPANY⁴

Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company was the youngest of three firms that emerged to become Minneapolis-Moline, a major farm implement manufacturer in the upper midwest. Minneapolis Steel and Machinery began operations in 1902, itself being the merger of three principals: the Minneapolis Malleable Iron Company, founded in 1900; the Twin City Iron Works, founded in 1889; and James L. Record, a former partner of a grain elevator company founded in 1885.

In April 1902, the partners of Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company bought some land near, and some of the buildings of, the Minnesota Harvester Works. The plant was refurbished and machinery was added before operations began in March 1903. From the beginning, the company produced such diversified steel products as engines, mill machinery and bridges.

In the company's early years, the mechanical department struggled to stay profitable, often earning only a few thousand dollars annually. The structural department kept the firm afloat, with annual profits of \$125,00 a year and more. In 1909, the company advertised itself as "Engineers and General Contractors for Bridges and for all kinds of Steel Structural Buildings." The company had branch offices in Salt Lake City, Denver, El Paso, Seattle, San Francisco, and Butte.

DESCRIPTION

The Cedar Street Bridge is 175 feet long and 26 feet wide. The width includes a 22-foot roadway and a 4-foot sidewalk. There are three approach spans, one of 12.5 feet and two of 20 feet. The spandrel columns are made up of four angle sections riveted to the lacing bars. The arch ribs are made of a 40-inch plate web riveted to two angle sections and a cover plate at each end. There is cross bracing at each panel point.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Cedar Street Bridge is one of two steel arch bridges of a similar type known to have been built in Wisconsin. The Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company was a regionally significant bridge building firm.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Pierce County's Heritage, Vol. 1: Student Research Papers, (University of Wisconsin, River Falls, 1971).
- ² River Falls Journal (River Falls, Wisconsin), May 17, 1894.
- ³ Map of River Falls, 1895
- ⁴ Robert Newbery, "Documentation for Determination of Eligibility: Cedar Street Bridge, River Falls, Wisconsin," Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1983.

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Bennett, Joan Kremer. River Falls: A Frontier Community Grows Up. River Falls, Wisconsin: River Falls Journal, Inc., 1977.

Newbery, Robert. "Documentation for Determination of Eligibility: Cedar Street Bridge, River Falls, Wisconsin." Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1983.

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